United Nations A/52/PV.62*

General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

62nd plenary meeting
Thursday, 4 December 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 59

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Draft resolution (A/52/L.7)

Amendment (A/52/L.47)

The President: I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that two proposals have so far been submitted under the agenda item 59 of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". They are draft resolution A/52/L.7 and the amendments to it contained in document A/52/L.47.

As we are opening the debate on agenda item 59, I would like to reconfirm my understanding that the General Assembly will not be taking any decision on this item at this stage of its consideration, in accordance with the assurances that I have received to this effect.

Referring to my consultations with the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, I would also like to advise the Assembly that there is no requirement for proposals submitted under a particular agenda item to be introduced at the beginning of the consideration of that item by the Assembly. In accordance with the established practices of the General Assembly, proposals submitted under a particular agenda item are introduced by their sponsors prior to the General Assembly's proceeding to take a decision on them.

In view of these considerations, it is my understanding that the statements made by Member States in the course of the debate on agenda item 59, without prejudice to their substance, should not be considered formal introductions of the proposals.

It is also my understanding that the introductions of the proposals under this agenda item, if and when they take place, will be in the order they were submitted, in accordance with, *inter alia*, rules 78, 90 and 91 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

We shall now proceed with the debate on this agenda item.

Mr. Kausikan (Singapore): Our discussions on Security Council reform over the last four years have resulted in two clear, if somewhat contradictory, conclusions. First, there is little doubt that the majority of Member States consider the current composition and working methods of the Security Council archaic and unsatisfactory. Secondly, it is, unfortunately, equally clear that, notwithstanding this widely held view, there are few prospects for early progress. The key difficulties arise from the many contradictions and ambiguities in the positions that the current permanent members have taken

98-85027 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

on Security Council reform; and, of course, the Charter gives them a decisive influence.

My delegation has on a number of previous occasions publicly analysed these contradictions and ambiguities. I will not repeat in detail what we have already exposed. I refer members to my delegation's statements in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform of 5 and 9 May and most recently to my Minister's statement in this Hall on 29 September.

A central issue is the failure of the current permanent members to clearly pronounce themselves on whether a new permanent member, be it from an industrialized or a developing country, should have the veto. The power of a new permanent member is not a question that can be deferred to a later date merely to make it easier to select new permanent members. This is because the powers of the new permanent members are intrinsic to the very notion and definition of permanent membership.

We did not expect answers to the questions that we posed, and we have not received any satisfactory answer. We are not particularly disappointed. Resolving the ambiguities is not just a matter of negotiating a text in a working group. It is not just a question of clever drafting or diplomatic ingenuity to paper over differences. The ambiguities reflect profound geopolitical uncertainties that can be settled only over time by events in the real world, and not in any working group.

This ought to be obvious if we consider the origins of the current permanent membership. The countries that are permanent members were the victors of the Second World War. They gave themselves the privilege of the veto because they were then so essential to the maintenance of international peace and security that they had to be reassured that they could not be compelled to take any action that could lead to conflicts among themselves. This would have broken up the United Nations.

At the end of the Second World War, it was relatively easy to determine the identity of these powerful few. With most of the world in ruins after a long and devastating conflict, it was easy to discern the winners and losers. It was logical that the victors should bear the primary responsibility for maintaining the new international order. In any case, there was no choice. No one else was in a position to successfully argue against their claims. Their status as permanent members reflected the compelling geopolitical realities of the day.

Nevertheless, even then two of the three big victors — the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom — were sceptical of Roosevelt's view of China's ability to play a major role in the post-war world, and Churchill's insistence on including France among the elite group met with similar scepticism from Roosevelt and Stalin. It should not therefore surprise us that we now run into even greater difficulties in trying to decide who belongs in the new elite.

The end of the cold war took everybody by surprise. Its resolution was far from clear-cut. The end of the cold war has precipitated a period of transition and uncertainty. We are still debating the consequences because we are still living through them. It is of course obvious that the world has changed, but this does not in itself prescribe any particular new geopolitical configuration. The power structure of the post-cold-war international order is still evolving. The outcome of this process cannot as yet be predicted. The United Nations, as an Organization of sovereign States, must necessarily reflect international reality more than shape it, whatever else some may pretend to believe. But even this incontrovertible fact provides no practical guidance for our discussions on Security Council reform.

If the purpose of Security Council reform is to more accurately reflect the post-cold-war world, then, logically, there should now be only one permanent member. Only the United States now disposes of the political, military and economic clout on the global scale needed to maintain international peace and security. But, of course, it is politically unacceptable to have only one permanent member. And even the United States, in its post-cold-war mood of introspection, faces domestic political difficulties in exercising its undoubted capabilities. The Administration's failure to persuade Congress to pay its arrears to the United Nations is but one small symptom.

Even a cursory examination of the current situation of the other permanent members may lead us to wonder what real meaning permanent membership has in the contemporary situation of geopolitical flux and uncertainty. Russia's main preoccupations are internal, and understandably so. Given the serious problems that it is grappling with, Russia has neither the capability nor the desire to consistently exercise power on a global scale as the Soviet Union did. Russia will certainly rise again, but it will be a different Russia with global interests and relationships different from those of the Soviet Union.

China is already a rising Power, but it is still primarily a regional Power. In per capita terms it will be a poor country well into the next century. Its focus is on economic development and resolving urgent internal problems. Its primary international interest for many years to come will be to secure peace and stability around its immediate borders so that it can continue to grow and deal with its internal problems. It will not be as deeply engaged elsewhere.

The United Kingdom and France are now European Powers with at best only residual global influence and limited clout outside the European Union. The sad recent history of Bosnia demonstrated that even the most powerful European States were not capable of settling a European problem by themselves. It was the intervention of the United States that proved decisive, and the United States chose the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), not the United Nations Security Council, as the vehicle for its intervention.

It is clear that most of the current permanent members no longer have the will or the capability to exercise power on the global scale necessary to maintain international peace and security as envisaged by the Charter. It is a geopolitical reality that in present times several current permanent members are not permanent members because they are great Powers or global Powers in the traditional sense of these terms. By a reversal of logic, if they currently enjoy the status of a great or a global Power, it is primarily because they are already permanent members.

Before I am drowned out by howls of protest, let me hastily make my position clear. I am not suggesting that Security Council reform requires that any current permanent member be relegated to the common herd. Of course, the consequences of such a suggestion are too horrifying to contemplate, especially for the countries that will be directly affected. So let it be placed on the record that I accept and respect the historical fait accompli, even if its logic is no longer compelling. I recognize the useful and constructive roles that many current permanent members continue to play in international affairs. And even if these are not the roles for which they were originally given permanent status, they deserve our appreciation.

My point is simply that these are different roles. These are no longer unique roles that no other country is capable of assuming. Several other Members of the United Nations already play similar roles without any ambition of elevation to permanent status.

Perhaps our discussion on Security Council reform would progress a little better if we temporarily abandon futile arguments over number and identity for a more fundamental re-examination of the meaning of permanent membership in the last years of the twentieth century. Let us examine what is really needed to maintain international peace and security in the twenty-first century. This is why my delegation had suggested, as early as the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly four years ago, that our discussions on Security Council reform should begin with an examination of the criteria for permanent membership. We are encouraged that several other delegations appear to be coming around to this view.

Our essential point can be stated simply. A reformed Security Council must reflect the post-cold-war geopolitical configuration if it is to be effective. The crucial decisions that will affect this geopolitical configuration are not going to be made in New York, or even in London, Paris, Washington, Beijing, Moscow, Berlin or Tokyo. It is not even clear that the geopolitical configuration can be shaped by a conscious and planned process of decision-making. The post-cold-war geopolitical configuration is going to emerge only gradually, over time, through the interactions of different countries in different regions of the world. It will be shaped by developments that cannot yet be predicted, developments which will probably surprise even those countries whose policies precipitated them. We will only waste time if we continue to pretend, as we unfortunately too often have for the last four years, that we can gather in a room in New York to decide the twenty-first century's geopolitical power structure through abstract intellectual debates.

Let me conclude by illustrating the point more concretely. My delegation has on several occasions commented on the studied ambiguity with which several, if not the majority, of the current permanent members have cloaked crucial aspects of their position on Security Council reform. This is understandable. No country is ever comfortable with a change in a status quo that favours it. But, that said, I must also acknowledge that a majority of the permanent members have appeared most categoric in their desire to see Japan and Germany as new permanent members. Let me therefore take that as the starting point of my illustration.

Many countries, certainly including my own and perhaps even a majority of Member States, would agree that when general agreement is reached on the expansion of the Security Council, Japan and Germany should be

among the new permanent members. That Japan and Germany now exercise global economic clout is not in dispute. Nor is the fact that they want and are searching for a bigger international political role. These are positive developments. They are among the new realities whose consequences have yet to unfold.

But precisely because of this, there is still no clear consensus, either in Germany or Japan or in their respective regions, on the precise international roles they should play, particularly if this will involve the deployment of military forces. There has never been a period in the entire sweep of Asian history in which China and Japan have been simultaneously strong Powers. We are now entering such a period, with all its attendant uncertainties. In Europe, a newly unified Germany and a Russia that is still struggling to redefine itself apart from the former Soviet Union are both, for different reasons, currently internally preoccupied. Neither has yet definitively settled their relationship with each other or with their neighbours.

It is therefore not surprising that China and Russia, like all other permanent members, have not been clear on whether or not Japan and Germany should have the veto. It is therefore still unclear whether they really believe Germany and Japan should be new permanent members — and this even though Japan and Germany enjoy widespread support for permanent membership from many other Member States.

I am not suggesting that Moscow and Beijing are being particularly difficult or different. After all, even the United States has not yet clearly stated that it trusts its own treaty allies, whose elevation to permanent status it strongly and publicly advocates, sufficiently to give them a veto over American policies. And even if the Administration is willing to do so, I am not sure Congress would agree.

This hesitation and coyness is perhaps only prudent. Perhaps it is even a duty, given the geopolitical uncertainties of the contemporary international system. Nobody wants to give any hostages to fortune. For the same reason, no Government that really believes that its country deserves permanent status can permanently commit all future governments to giving up the veto. The geopolitical uncertainties are no less elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They will certainly not be settled by conceptually contradictory slogans such as permanent rotational membership, as has been suggested by some.

I hope I am not misunderstood. I am not suggesting that China and Japan cannot cooperate or that Germany and Russia will never coexist. This is obviously not true, because they are already doing so. But the present happy situation is not to be taken for granted given the long, complex and often troubled history of relations between these countries — a history that, in the case of China and Japan, has been characterized by many centuries of profound ambiguity. It is not unreasonable for countries that enjoy the privileges of the status quo to prefer to avoid making precipitate decisions. In fact, this is an entirely reasonable position to take given the geopolitical uncertainties. It would therefore be equally unreasonable to expect Asia, Africa or Latin America to take precipitate decisions on who from their regions should enjoy permanent status.

Time and events will clarify matters. How much time, no one can presently honestly say. Events must mature and unfold naturally to clarify themselves. This is not a process that can or should be rushed.

We would do the United Nations and the Security Council grievous damage if we were to take decisions that might eventually bear only a tenuous relationship to what finally evolves in the real world. Any international organization of sovereign States dooms itself to irrelevance if it ignores or divorces itself from the realities in which it is embedded. And the shape of those realities can be only imperfectly glimpsed at present. This is why we, like other Non-Aligned Movement countries, have been consistent in cautioning against a hasty decision on Security Council reform. A Security Council that includes all who now most assiduously press their claims to permanent status, but excludes other, currently not so obvious candidates whose claims may yet become compelling, would not just be ineffective. It would tear this Organization apart.

Four years is not a long time, given the gravity of the issues at stake. We understand the frustrations of those who see their hopes and ambitions recede with each passing year of endless debate. But pressure-cooking the process will not settle the crucial geopolitical realities that will, in the end, be decisive. Those countries that deserve permanent status will be given it when the time is ripe, not before. And when the time is ripe, there is no power that can resist their claims. Let us therefore not lose faith or patience and by so doing come to regret the consequences.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom): I do not wish to be misunderstood either. I do not want it to be thought that I am taking the floor in right of reply to the previous speaker. His views are always stimulating, though slightly exaggerated. But, as always, finding fault with the existing realities is somewhat of an evasion of the necessity which I think we all feel to try and find a way forward to the problems which he delineates, and the only way forward is to find a solution through negotiation. We have made a lot of painstaking efforts in that direction, and my delegation believes that the sensible thing to do is to continue.

It is always easy to attack the existing system without being quite so frank about the choices which all countries have to make with regard to the areas closest to themselves. We believe that the proposals which are on the table, in particular those submitted by President Razali last year, offer the best way of dealing with that admittedly very sensitive subject.

It was four years and one day ago that the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/26, which established the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, four years in which everybody has been agreed on the objective of enlargement of the Security Council, but in which, to the disappointment and frustration of the vast majority of us, a clearly ratifiable proposal for enlargement has yet to emerge. But the issue of the enlargement of the Security Council and reform of the methods of work of the Security Council remains as important now as it seemed to be four years ago. The political case for this item of reform is just as compelling as it is for other aspects of the modernization of this Organization.

We are closer now to seeing the outlines of a solution than we were at this time last year. This progress can be ascribed to two major developments: first, the consultations carried out by the co-vice-chairmen of the Working Group last winter. Their soundings demonstrated beyond any doubt that the vast majority of Member States do not want a temporary, half-hearted reform in just one category of Council membership, but a durable and significant enlargement in both categories of membership that increases developing country representation in those two categories. This general objective has furthermore been endorsed by several of the permanent members. For this, and for the rest of their hard work, we owe the co-Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Breitenstein and Jayanama, a vote of great thanks.

The second development was the presentation last March, by the then President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali, of a draft resolution on reform. This moved the discussion in a more concrete direction, and was the sort of comprehensive proposal which had long been required. It built on the co-vice-chairmen's consultations. It identified the mainstream in the debate, and came to be regarded as successfully representing the negotiating middle ground. Although it presented a number of delegations, including my own, with problems, it offered by far the best prospect for a solution so far, and indeed sparked a considerable amount of further positive consideration about how some of the remaining issues might eventually be solved. This was perhaps the most fruitful time in our debate so far, and we look forward to further consideration of the proposal this year.

Of course, neither of these developments brought about a consensus. Like your predecessor, Mr. President, you will be wise enough to recognize that consensus on a solution to this particular issue is probably unobtainable. But we recognize the need to respect the requirements of Article 108 of the Charter in a resolution adopting amendments to the Charter. Indeed, the statutory two-thirds majority for such a resolution would be a barely acceptable minimum. We want further efforts on a concrete proposal to reconcile the views of the greatest possible number of Member States. But at the end of the day, the General Assembly is here to take political decisions, and every effort should be made to take the necessary decisions at this session of the General Assembly — and by the largest possible majority.

There is always an argument for putting something off. When Mr. Razali produced his proposal, the response was not so much that he had misjudged the content, but that more time should be given for consultation, particularly at the level of regional groups, and that the Assembly should not be rushed into a decision which would have lasting implications. That was nearly nine months ago. The proposal did serve, however, as an impetus for more focused thinking on how the tricky questions — in particular that of selecting new permanent members, especially from the developing world — should be approached, and in this regard it was a positive step forward.

Draft resolution A/52/L.7, sponsored by Italy and others, is, on the other hand, simply an invitation to eternal delay. Whatever the diversity of views among its supporters, it offers a backhanded endorsement of the

status quo and ignores the progress which we made last year. We would share many of the specific comments made on the draft resolution by Ambassador Eitel in his latest letter to Permanent Representatives. We therefore welcome the announcement by you, Mr. President, of the understanding that no action will be taken on draft resolution A/52/L.7 at this stage.

The challenge remains, however, for the majority to find a basis for a broadly supported decision. My delegation is only one of many which have shown flexibility and political will over the last few months to try to achieve this, and we are not about to abandon the effort. There is now a much greater understanding on all sides of the parameters within which a workable outcome can be reached, and we will continue to make every effort with like-minded countries to bring this necessary reform to early fruition. Indeed, we are encouraged by the fact that the political energy still invested in this discussion proves that, underneath it all, there is a widespread recognition that this reform is inevitable.

We hope therefore that we shall begin our work in the new year with determination, building on the progress made during the fifty-first session and with an eye to taking a decision on the size and shape of the Council before the end of this "Reform Assembly".

Mr. Eitel (Germany): For several weeks, many of us have been working to prepare for the discussion on agenda item 59. I am pleased that today offers another opportunity to make a couple of remarks on the issue. It is first and foremost here in the General Assembly that the important issues are and must be decided.

You, Mr. President, have prepared this debate carefully. You have consulted many delegations and have formed a common understanding about the way for our discussions to go forward and about their procedural result. You have acted with the authority and credibility inherent in the office of the President, and you deserve credit and applause. My delegation will do everything to respect and support your guidance.

The year 1997, especially the past few weeks, has been particularly dynamic as far as Security Council reform is concerned. It seems to me that procedural considerations, such as when and how the General Assembly should take a decision, have become more and more important and have been discussed almost more frequently than substance.

What precisely has happened since the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council started its work last January? First, we have witnessed the largest consultations in the history of the United Nations: the consultations of the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama, with 165 Member States, which led to major findings and clear majority views. Secondly, we have witnessed the presentation of the first full reform package, submitted by the former Chairman, Ambassador Razali. Thirdly, we have participated in the opening debate of the new session with Member States overwhelmingly focusing on United Nations and Security Council reform.

On these lines, I would like in my statement to focus on the following four main points: Germany as part of the mainstream; putting an end to self-centred discussions; the need for an agenda rather than an imposed time-frame; and faithful application of Article 108 of the Charter.

Six general debates, six agenda item debates and four Open-ended Working Group reports, with 48 annexes all together, have provided us with an extraordinary amount of statements, positions and proposals. Sometimes I feel as if we were like 185 pedestrians, looking for their way home in a big, rather dark, city with many unfamiliar streets, avenues and places. Many of us were lucky to find their way — they took what I will call the "Avenue of the Two Enlarged Categories". That Avenue is ample and straight, with enough space for everyone. I would like to see as many as possible of the pedestrians who are still in search of their way, join those who have started to walk down the "Avenue of the Two Enlarged Categories". This Avenue is spacious; it has two lanes. It is straight; there are no unnecessary detours. It is secure in spite of heavy traffic — hopefully, 24 members of an enlarged Council. It has enough sidewalk space. It is easy to look down because it is transparent. And it is easy to maintain — the next overhaul, by a review, is already scheduled.

In my view, both the former Chairman and the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group have made it clear in their papers annexed to the last report that their assessment of the views of 165 Member States go in that direction. One of the main findings was that a very large majority supported an increase in both categories — permanent and non-permanent — with a

majority of them supporting an increase of five non-permanent and five permanent members, while only a few expressed categorical opposition to an increase in permanent membership. The Vice-Chairmen concluded that their findings made it clear that the Open-ended Working Group should fulfil its mandate within an expeditious and realistic time-frame.

I carefully double-checked both elements — enlargement in the two categories and expeditious fulfilment of the mandate — with the views expressed by Heads of State, Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation during this session's opening debate in September-October. Regarding the first element, I found that only 11 — which makes 12 per cent — out of 93 Member States that addressed the question of categories were against new permanent members, four of them expressing not even categorical opposition, but, rather, doubts or preference for rotation schemes on permanent seats. The rest, 81 Member States — which makes 88 per cent — favoured an increase in both categories. Among those that did not address the question were many Member States which referred in general to the official Organization of African Unity (OAU) position or which are otherwise known to support enlargement in both categories of membership.

Regarding the second element, my main criterion was: how did delegations tackle the question of the right timing? Out of 176 statements, 85 — which is almost 80 per cent of those that addressed this question — made more or less the point that a decision on Security Council reform should be taken soon. Only 18 — which is about 20 per cent of those who spoke to it — argued openly against any decision in the near future.

We must face one certainty: as long as we continue our discussion without a concrete negotiating text, all of us will continue to bargain for "best positions". If these "best positions" are maintained or new "best positions" are added, the failure of Security Council reform is guaranteed.

From the beginning, my delegation has tried to do its part to facilitate the process. We have proposed a periodic review which allows new permanent members to be replaced after 10, 15 or 20 years, thereby introducing a new and accountable concept of permanency. Moreover, we have stated on various occasions that, while discrimination within membership categories must be avoided, innovative and future-oriented ways of exercising the veto could be introduced.

In other areas, we also plead for a compromise between minimalist and maximalist positions, leading us to an enlargement package with the following features. The first is four new non-permanent members. The second is five new permanent members, three from the South and two industrialized States. Thirdly, there is election of the possible new permanent members by the General Assembly. Regional groups are not denied the right to propose regional mechanisms to the General Assembly as well; the General Assembly has the final decision. Fourthly, the original permanent members are to be engaged in a dialogue on their veto. Fifthly, the General Assembly decides about a veto for the new permanent members. If it does not agree on a solution, a high-level working group might be set up. In the meantime, new permanent members would enjoy certain interim rights.

Member States have come a long way in discussing reform. Since before 1992, when Member States were invited to submit comments on a possible review of the membership of the Security Council, the issue has been discussed year after year during the opening and the general debate of the forty-seventh, forty-eighth, forty-ninth, fiftieth and fifty-first sessions and now the fifty-second session. In addition, in 1993 the Open-ended Working Group was established, and since then it has submitted its yearly reports to the General Assembly. These reports were considered and adopted by the General Assembly in 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997.

This issue cannot continue to be discussed in an abstract and endless manner. It ties up too many resources. Spending too much time and too many resources on dealing only with our own, home-made institutional challenges is not in line with our moral obligation to tackle the really pressing issues, issues which this Organization was created for. As examples, let me mention the areas of development, environment and human rights. In any of them, the existing situation gives serious reason for concern and requires immediate action. Can Member States and the United Nations afford to remain caught up in an internal, self-centred institutional debate which started at the beginning of this decade, if not earlier? My answer is a straight "No". Let us therefore put an end to our navel-gazing and show public opinion that the United Nations can do more than get absorbed in self-focused discussions. Security Council reform is not *l'art pour l'art*.

The imposed time-frame notion has made its entry into declarations of important groups of Member States,

such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of African States, to mention only two. Germany could not agree more with this position. No one can impose a time-frame on the General Assembly. There can be little doubt either that the General Assembly is sovereign in arranging a calendar for its decisions, if it wants to. A decision taken by the General Assembly in this sense, and in accordance with the Charter and the rules of procedure, is not "imposed"; at least, I myself have never heard someone question the legitimacy of a decision of the General Assembly by calling it "imposed". What we are dealing with here is not an imposed time-frame but a most ordinary agenda. It is agendas which determine our lives. Without an agenda little would ever go ahead.

By taking a decision in the near future, we would not introduce divisions in the United Nations membership, as some have claimed. The opposite seems to me to be true: the real division would be a continuation of fruitless and antagonizing exchanges in the Open-ended Working Group without any time agenda. Rather, further damage and contention would be prevented if an early preliminary decision to put Security Council reform on the tracks were taken through a democratic decision-making process in the General Assembly.

While I am convinced that sufficient time for reflection has to be given to those who need it, I am also pleading that we give ourselves a clear agenda to arrive at a decision. Moreover, I would like to point out two things. First, my delegation, at least, was not ready, and still is not ready, to put forward a proposal, since we feel that, in particular, the question of the overall size of the Security Council has not yet been agreed entirely. Secondly, if we had found agreement on a proposal with our like-minded friends, the Assembly can take my word that it would not have been presented to the membership by surprise. We have always been open about that, to everybody, including the main sponsors of document A/52/L.7.

Let me finally turn to a point of particular importance: the proposal to go beyond the Charter and to apply its Article 108 not only to amendments, but also to "amendment implications". I have been wondering what "implications" could mean in legal terms. For instance has a resolution like the one the Sixth Committee — our lawyers — adopted on 6 December 1995, with the positive votes of Italy and Mexico and as many as 92 countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, among them Egypt and Pakistan, had Charter amendment "implications"? When I read the resolution I found that by it the General Assembly recognizes that

> "the 'enemy State' clauses in Articles 53, 77 and 107 of the Charter have become obsolete". [Resolution 50/52, thirteenth preambular paragraph]

A few lines later the resolution expresses the intention of the General Assembly to

> "initiate the procedure set out in Article 108 of the Charter ... to amend the Charter" [ibid, para. 3]

— that is, to apply Article 108 only at a later, perhaps the next, stage of the process. In my view, resolution 50/52 did have clear Charter amendment "implications", but correctly deferred the application of Article 108 to the next stage of amending the Charter *in concreto*.

To take another example: what if a draft Charter amendment resolution were to be postponed or submitted to a no-action motion? Would not we have to admit that these actions had "implications" for the envisaged Charter amendments? Or does not the General Assembly, when it decides to adopt reports of the Open-ended Working Group stating that there is agreement to expand the Security Council — see, for instance, paragraph 13 of document A/49/47 of 15 September 1995 — take decisions with Charter amendment "implications"?

Security Council reform is too important an issue to let ambiguities on the necessary voting majorities continue to exist. In paragraph 2 of Article 18, the Charter provides that decisions on important questions

> "shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting".

I shall give an example. If for a vote on an important resolution which does not contain a Charter amendment 180 Member States are present and 170 of them vote, the necessary majority will be 114, which is two-thirds of 170. It is Germany's firm view that this majority must apply to important resolutions dealing with Security Council reform.

Article 108 of the Charter requires a majority of two-thirds of all Member States, which means at least 124 out of the present 185 Member States. Scholars and academia consider Article 108 a derogation of, and exception to, the general rules laid down in paragraph 2 of Article 18 of the Charter, and therefore not open to analogous extension and applicable only when — to quote Article 108 — "Amendments to the present Charter" are submitted. The *raison d'etre* of Article 108 is that the

authors of the Charter wanted to make sure that any amendment to be sent to parliaments for ratification would have received beforehand a sufficiently large majority in the General Assembly to guarantee its following ratification.

Introducing a term like "Charter amendment implications" is not helpful, and even risks disrespect for the Charter and its well-defined voting system. Politically, it does not make a great difference, since the necessity of reaching a two-thirds majority of members present and voting under paragraph 2 of Article 18 is undisputed. When the General Assembly decision on concrete Charter amendments is taken, the necessary majority will, of course, have to be at least 124.

This interpretation of Article 108 of the Charter seems to me to be clear. However, in order to have the question clarified for everybody, I should like to ask you, Mr. President, to request a legal opinion from the Secretariat on the issue of whether or not Article 108 of the Charter is also applicable to decisions with amendment "implications".

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Mr. President, I would like to start by expressing my delegation's sincere appreciation for your skilful guidance in preparing the ground for today's debate. Security Council reform being one of the central issues on the United Nations agenda, it is reassuring to note that the President of the General Assembly is ready to exercise his wisdom and leadership in order to move our debate forward.

We have travelled a considerable distance since I last took the podium to address this issue a year ago. Thanks to the competence and dedication demonstrated by the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand, we were able to start the year 1997 under the sign of a renewed dynamism. The exchange of views which they carried out with a total of 165 delegations, large and small, individually or in groups, revealed certain trends, providing delegations with a more focused image of where the possibilities for agreement lie. Their important findings, as transmitted to the Working Group on 10 and 14 March, have been included in our latest report, document A/51/47, under annex VII, and deserve to be recalled.

The co-Vice-Chairmen were able to discern the existence of a very large majority which favours an increase in both permanent and non-permanent membership. It is also of great significance that this majority believes there should be permanent members from both developing and industrialized countries.

These are the essential elements on the basis of which we must search for general agreement. My delegation, along with many others, is ready to proceed on Council reform taking fully into account the solid preparatory groundwork undertaken during this active year. As was made clear in the speech delivered by the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Relations, Ambassador Luiz Felipe Lampreia:

> "There is a new thrust to negotiations. There is leadership, as well as carefully crafted proposals. We must take advantage of this unique opportunity in the history of the United Nations. We must not let the moment pass. Reform has become, more than a key concept; it has become the order of the day". [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 5th meeting, p. 7]

In January 1998 the Working Group will resume its activities. Brazil is convinced that there is no need for additional exploratory debates and that we should fully embark on a negotiating process. We do not favour the establishment of artificial targets of any kind for completing our work. But we also oppose attempts to unduly slow down proceedings. Let us put aside the idea of artificial time-frames of any kind, either to impose hasty solutions or to obstruct the process. Let us make the most of the present session of the General Assembly in its entirety and concentrate our attention on the issues that require further refinement, such as veto and numbers — and I will come back to that later.

In this year's general debate, Brazil expressed its willingness to accept the responsibilities of permanent membership in the Security Council, if called upon by the international community. Brazil is determined to carry out the role of permanent member as the representative of Latin America and the Caribbean so that our region may be present in the Council on a permanent basis and, through regular coordination and consultation, have a strong collective voice. As a non-permanent member, we have endeavoured in the past to maintain close coordination with countries in the region, and we will continue to do so during our next mandate. We are prepared to make this coordination and these consultations even more systematic and formal, in order

to ensure that the interests and concerns of the region will be reflected to the fullest extent possible.

We consider that the proposal contained in annex I of this year's report — the so-called Razali proposal — constitutes an appropriate framework, with the necessary adjustments, for reforming the Security Council in a non-discriminatory and democratic way, allowing for Member States to express themselves in the General Assembly on candidacies for permanent membership from both the industrialized and the developing world. The proposal provides sufficient leeway for regional consultation and does not prejudge any outcome, although it does rule out discriminatory ones, which is one of the main reasons why we value it so much. We should not forget, in this respect, that since the adoption at the end of the General Assembly's fiftieth session of the report contained in document A/50/47, we have been working under the assumption that:

> "In the event that there is agreement for an increase in the permanent membership, an increase only by industrialized countries would be widely regarded as unacceptable." [A/50/47, para. 26]

We would regard a reform which ascribed full permanent seats to industrialized countries and rotating seats to the developing world as unacceptable and contrary to that conclusion. It is a different matter if one part of the world comes forth with a specific suggestion arrived at by consensus, at the regional level, and submits it to the General Assembly. We understand that this has been a position held by African countries, and we fully respect that, even if, conceptually, we might have our misgivings.

We are confident that we will continue to move away from discriminatory conceptions of expansion and that those who contemplate the idea of permanent rotating seats as a solution for their own region will continue to hold that this is not exportable. As far as we are concerned, there is no market in Latin America and the Caribbean for this product.

In spite of the important strides made this year, we have still not found a centre of gravity as regards some complex issues, such as the veto and the total number of members in an expanded Council. Brazil has advanced several ideas with the objective of rendering the decision-making process in the Security Council more democratic, without impinging upon Charter privileges which the five permanent members are clearly unprepared to give up at this stage. We believe that there should be no discrimination, in principle, between current and new permanent members. At the same time, we have suggested that new permanent members might consider the option of not exercising their veto rights, without relinquishing them, until a comprehensive agreement on decision-making, involving all permanent members, can be arrived at. In other words, sensitive as the veto issue may be, it should not prevent us from moving ahead on expanding the Council's composition.

As to the overall number of members, a few delegations continue to have misgivings about a Council of more than 21 participants, in contrast with the preference of the wide majority for a higher figure, somewhere in the mid-twenties. While the problems related to the veto — in spite of the fact that they touch on difficult questions of principle — may be surmountable through intensified dialogue and negotiation, it appears that the numbers issue is at once a simpler but a more immediate stumbling block. It is our expectation that, as other aspects fall into place, some creative thinking on matters such as the action threshold and on improved Security Council practices and procedures may be able to help us in this regard.

It has sometimes been alleged that the incapacity of developing countries to reach consensus on prospective permanent members constitutes a major obstacle at this stage of our work. This is a gross distortion of the facts. To start with, as we all know, the strongest opposition to expansion in permanent membership is to be found in the industrialized world itself. The argument according to which there is no consensus in the regions of the South applies, perhaps with greater validity, to regions of the North. But this is not the issue. Consensus, although desirable, may not be attainable in any region, North or South. The real issues that are impeding progress are the veto and the numbers question. These should be the focus of attention as we resume our discussions within the Working Group next year.

If so many delegations have expressed an interest on this item of our agenda it is because we are here discussing the credibility of the United Nations in a principal area of concern: the maintenance of international peace and security. The future of the multilateral system of collective security rests on the legitimacy and representativeness of the Security Council. As recently stated in the British magazine *The Economist* in an article on one of the major crises that the world is facing now,

"the Security Council is in a poor way, knowing that it should long ago have reformed itself".

Let us not prolong this agony indefinitely. Let us work firmly and responsibly towards a solution that is equitable and balanced, that takes into account aspirations of all nations, large and small, developed and developing, but, above all, let us bear in mind that this exercise is not about the prestige of any individual country or group of countries. It is about the prestige and effectiveness of our Organization.

Mr. Donokusumo (Indonesia): It is most gratifying for my delegation to note that the deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group during the past five years on the question of expansion and reform of the Security Council have, so far, resulted in progress in some areas of interest to Member States. Chief among them has been the recognition that an increase in its membership must reflect the vastly increased membership of the Organization and take into account the significant changes that have taken place in the international arena. It should also encompass the current geopolitical realities, lead to the Council's democratization and confer greater legitimacy on its decisions. Thus, the culmination of our efforts should lead to a revamped Security Council that can effectively meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Beyond this paradigm, however, and notwithstanding strenuous and dedicated efforts, it is undeniable that the discussions in the Working Group have been stymied over a myriad of issues, most notably the size and scope of its expansion and its modalities, the election of new permanent members and equitable representation for the developing countries, decision-making and accountability. These have so far defied a rational solution and cannot be brushed aside. The numerous proposals that have been submitted do not as yet constitute a workable hypothesis from which to proceed further and to seek an acceptable solution. This is because some of them were deemed inequitable and discriminatory and, hence, non-starters, while others call for further clarification and elucidation.

Clearly, therefore, a general agreement has so far eluded us, because of fundamental differences on the issues involved. Consequently, the mandate entrusted to the Working Group remains unfulfilled.

The fact that reform of the Security Council has been long overdue and has become urgent should not lead us to hasty and ill-considered solutions which will call into question the integrity and credibility of the reform process. In my delegation's view, that would constitute a flawed approach which is unlikely to contribute to the strengthening of the Security Council, to which we are all committed.

For these reasons, my delegation calls for a continuation of the Working Group's deliberations in addressing the unresolved issues and in narrowing our differences. We are committed to achieving further progress under its auspices and have full confidence in the effective discharge of its mandate. However, we are also acutely aware of continuing differences on many substantive issues, which have persisted. Hence, it is not tenable to adopt an expeditious approach in seeking agreements of a comprehensive nature while papering over these differences and disagreements.

This is precisely the reason why Indonesia has endorsed the call for taking the time that is necessary so that we can endeavour to reach a general agreement. It is fully in conformity with the position taken by the ministerial meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries held in New York last September, which unequivocally expressed its opposition to an imposed time-frame. The communiqué issued by the meeting along with those by the Organization of African Unity and the Ibero-American meetings held last summer should constitute reference guides for our future endeavours.

It is self-evident that the complex set of issues attendant upon the question of expansion and reform of the Security Council is not amenable to a general agreement at this point of time, which has rendered imperative the renewal of dialogue for a thorough discussion of all the questions without an artificial acceleration of the whole process. That would afford an opportunity not only to undertake a review and reappraisal of the proposals already submitted, but also to consider new proposals such as two new permanent members for the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. And it would also deal with Article 108 of the Charter, which will surely be invoked in the event of amendments and whose centrality and sanctity must be preserved. Its faithful and consistent implementation must be ensured in the context of the restructuring of the Security Council.

In conclusion, Mr. President, my delegation is deeply indebted to you for your role in facilitating assurances from interested Member States that:

"we will not be taking any decisions on this item at this stage of its consideration."

You have thus paved the way for a fuller discussion of all the issues involved and for a democratic decision by the General Assembly. This augurs well for our future endeavours in seeking well thought out and balanced decisions.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): For the fourth consecutive year, the Assembly is meeting to consider the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation of and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. This indicates the great importance of what is at stake and the complexity of the question of reform of this powerful decision-making organ of the Organization.

Since the General Assembly decided to establish the Open-ended Working Group on reform of the Security Council in 1993, every delegation here has devoted a great deal of energy to thinking about the issue and a great deal of time to seeking points of agreement in an attempt to achieve the much desired reform of this central organ of the United Nations system in a spirit of harmony.

I am pleased to emphasize and welcome the commendable efforts of States individually and groups of States collectively to make their valuable contributions to this joint thought process.

The presentation last March by the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Working Group, of documents summarizing the proposals of Member States, and the relevant decisions adopted by the Ministerial Conference of the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi and the Organization of African Unity Summit in Harare, as well as the American proposals on the reform of the Council, are, in the view of my delegation, major steps forward stages and provide a perfect illustration of our collective commitment to promoting conditions for a significant breakthrough in our work.

However, there is no denying that despite these concrete, commendable efforts, prospects for complete and comprehensive reform of the Security Council to make it a modern, democratic and transparent organ are still an objective, a goal that is yet to be reached. Indeed, many questions are pending, in particular those relating to the expansion of the two categories of membership of the Council, the composition of the Council, the use of the right of veto, improvement of the Council's working methods, and the question of periodic review.

With regard to expansion, there can be no doubt that there are still marked differences between those advocating an expansion in both categories and those proposing an expansion limited only to the category of non-permanent members.

In this debate, we Africans have proposed and insist upon an expansion of the Council in both categories of members, and the granting to Africa of at least two permanent and two non-permanent seats, which would be apportioned to African countries on the basis of decisions by the Africans themselves, through a system of rotation based on criteria which are specific to Africa.

In this regard, the African Group will soon present a document on the concept and modalities of that rotation and its application to the permanent seats. In my view, this document is a major contribution to the efforts of our Working Group and deserves to be studied by the countries of the Group which are interested in this concept.

Once again, my delegation feels that the formula for this rotation is an African recipe. It is a system drawn from African wisdom, and which as such cannot be exported.

Turning to the question of the composition of the future Council, my delegation has always expressed the hope of achieving a dynamic compromise on the two current positions — that of democratization in representation, which presupposes a Council expanded to 26 members, and that of effectiveness in the functioning of the Council, which would reduce that number to 21. The dynamic compromise we seek, if it is to be achieved, should not occur to the detriment of the interests of our continent of Africa.

I am certain that the Chairman of the African Group, or the representative of Zimbabwe, whose country currently holds the presidency of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), will speak during the discussion to set out the African position on Security Council reform in detail.

On the issue of the veto, we have noted the resistance in some quarters, especially among certain

permanent members, to accepting changes with respect both to the limitation and the elimination of the right of veto which has, in the eyes of the majority of States, become an anachronistic right.

On the basis of the principle that debates dealing with the expansion of the Council and the application of the right of veto could lead to a real blockage of all our discussions, last April I put forward, on behalf of my delegation, the idea of engaging in an in-depth debate on the question of the veto with the permanent members, in order to reach an agreement with them on modifications which, by common consent, could be made to the scope of application of the veto.

At that time, I advocated entrusting the study of the delicate and complex question of the veto to a restricted but open committee made up of certain designated ambassadors within the Working Group, whose mandate would be to focus exclusively on an overall in-depth study of the question of the right of veto, bearing in mind the views of the permanent members and the numerous ideas developed by Member States in the debates.

To my mind, this committee on the veto should work at the same time a the high-level Working Group sessions, so that the conclusions to be submitted to the broader Working Group will fit smoothly into a general agreement on the reform of the Security Council. I believe that this approach elicited some interest, and I am happy to note today that this idea has made some headway and could be taken up again in the framework of our future negotiations.

Once the scope of application of the veto has been defined and accepted, the privilege of using that power should, in my delegation's view, belong to all permanent members, both the current ones and the new ones.

During our debates, many delegations have also put forward useful suggestions for improvements in the Council's methods of work which, if applied, would ensure greater transparency and legitimacy in this central organ of the system. Commendable efforts have already been carried out along these lines. They deserve to be followed up on, and the measures recommended should be institutionalized.

Likewise, and with a view to allowing the Security Council to adapt and play its full role as described in the Charter, it seems to me essential to establish a system of periodic review that would take world developments into account. To my mind, and as I understand it, only the length of the review period remains the subject of some differences of opinion, which I consider to be surmountable if the political will exists.

The work of reforming the Security Council calls for an innovative and responsible approach on the part of the Member States, bearing in mind the very special interest given to this organ. The high-level Working Group on the reform of the Security Council has made considerable progress, even if consensus has yet to be achieved on such fundamental points as expansion, composition and the right of veto.

In my delegation's view, this is the time to appeal for a redoubling of our efforts and imagination and to make maximum use of the momentum created by our discussions, so as to achieve our objective of restructuring the Security Council as soon as possible.

My delegation therefore supports the recommendation made by the Working Group whereby the General Assembly would allow it to continue its work during this fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, my delegation feels that the present work on reforming the Security Council is a historic opportunity, in the wake of the reform of 1965. For us, the countries of Africa, this is the only opportunity we have to be better represented within this organ. My country therefore feels that we should not be obliged to lose this chance to become future permanent and non-permanent members of this organ, which is invested with genuine decision-making power within the system.

It must be acknowledged that there are still problems to be solved, compromises to be reached, and reconciliation to be achieved. Let us be brave enough to say so. But let us also agree, in good faith, to move forward by capitalizing on the points of convergence and preserving what has been achieved and the momentum created, so as to bring to a harmonious and reasonably speedy conclusion our joint inquiry into the important issue which has been entrusted to us.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Today, the General Assembly is considering the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. This topic has undoubtedly occupied an important place in reflections on United Nations reform, and has attracted the attention of public opinion.

Only a few months ago, when it concluded its deliberations on the subject for 1997, the General Assembly had the opportunity of examining the report submitted to it by the Open-ended Working Group dealing with the matter. The Assembly adopted without a vote the draft decision contained in paragraph 10 of document A/51/47, recommending that the Group continue its work during the present session. The delegation of Mexico joined in that consensus, and it is now offering to participate actively in the discussion of this important subject when the Working Group meets again in 1998.

Throughout our deliberations, Mexico's participation in the Working Group has been consistent with the position we have taken since the composition and decision-making methods of the Security Council were discussed in 1945 during the San Francisco Conference.

As the documents of the Conference which gave birth to our Organization attest, even then Mexico was not in favour of creating the category of permanent members of the Security Council. We believed then, and we continue to believe today, as was recalled by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico during the general debate at this session, that this division

> "establishes a discriminatory situation — a situation which is exacerbated by the permanent members having been given the right of the veto". [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 9th meeting, p. 24]

The political circumstances in 1945 compelled us to accept that in an Organization based on the principle of the sovereign equality of States, five of its Members would enjoy a higher status with special rights and prerogatives.

In line with this position of principle, by which we have stood since 1945, the Mexican delegation submitted in 1995 a specific proposal on the enlargement of the Security Council for consideration by the Working Group. That proposal, which is being circulated in this Hall today, provides for an increase of five members, all of them in the non-permanent category. I wish to reaffirm here that our suggestion remains on the table awaiting substantive consideration.

We have been asked why we continue to insist that the increase in the composition of the Council should be confined solely and exclusively to the category of non-permanent members. The reasons we gave at the time we submitted our proposal remain valid. We are convinced that the Council needs to be enlarged to reflect the current composition of the Organization and, at the same time, to ensure that it is an organ that acts efficiently and effectively while being more transparent and, above all, more democratic.

We know that there are a number of countries, led by the so-called pretenders, that argue that the best way of reflecting the present world situation as this century draws to a close can only be through an increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council. The reason, we are told without further justification, will confer greater legitimacy on its decisions. Nevertheless, they have not been able and, indeed, are not able to explain why a Council with 10 permanent members would be more efficient. They do not tell us why a Security Council with 10 permanent members would be more effective. Nor are they able to explain why a Security Council with 10 permanent members would act more transparently than it does at present. And they are of course unable to convince us — because there are no arguments to support their case — that a Security Council with twice the number of States holding the immense power and privileges enjoyed by permanent members would be more democratic.

If we limit ourselves to the best-known possibility and conduct an analysis of the configuration of the Security Council with the so-called pretenders included, the result would be to undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter, which we all maintain to be of special importance, such as those establishing the sovereign equality of States, equity and geographical distribution.

If the so-called pretenders were to realize their dream of becoming new permanent members, we would then have a Security Council in which the European Union, made up of 15 States, would have three permanent members. It must not be forgotten that the European Union, which undoubtedly represents a new factor in international relations, aspires not only to a single currency but also to the establishment of a common foreign and defence policy. Of course, we wish the European countries every success in achieving the goal of integration they have set for themselves. What cannot be explained is why, in the same context, they feel the need to have, not one, not two, but three permanent members.

Since 1991 we have been teaching our children that the cold war is over. We welcome that fact, but we wonder why the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a

military alliance now made up of 16 countries that was established in the context of bipolar confrontation, wants to have four permanent members.

A still more illogical projection is what would happen to the group of States known as the Group of Eight. This handful of countries would have six permanent members. Six of its eight members would belong to the privileged category. In this scenario, we would have a Security Council in which the privileged group would be predominantly European and, obviously, developed. Is that genuine geographical balance? Whatever happened to the principle of equity and representativeness? It is totally ignored in this new composition.

Finally, I wish to reiterate emphatically that for Mexico it is unacceptable that, as we approach the end of the century, an attempt should be made to increase the number of States enjoying the privilege of the enormous power that the Charter confers on the permanent members of the Security Council.

We do not believe there is any justification whatsoever for establishing new power centres in our Organization. We have said so before, and we repeat it now. We are convinced that the five States to which the Charter assigned special status — by a majority decision, not a unanimous one, in San Francisco — are more than enough.

If we really want to make progress on resolving this issue, we shall have to devise equitable and non-discriminatory mechanisms that are acceptable to all. We again urge the pretenders to give up their ambitions and act in accordance with the spirit of democracy and equity that should be the lifeblood of international relations at the end of the century.

I should like now to refer briefly to the most obvious exceptional power conferred by the Charter on the permanent members of the Security Council. This is, of course, what in legal terms is called the rule of unanimity of the permanent members, and is generally known as the privilege of the veto.

We have learned to live with the injustice of a provision that we had to accept in San Francisco and that we were assured would maintain unity among the victors of the Second World War. In fact, however, the veto did not serve this purpose. The rivalry between the Powers was apparent from the very inception of our Organization, and for many years their antagonism even prevented the admission of new members to the United Nations. More than 20 States, victims of a confrontation that had nothing to do with them, had their entry unnecessarily postponed. It may be noted, as an interesting footnote, that among them are the main pretenders to a higher category and to the privilege that did them so much harm in the past.

In San Francisco, Mexico was opposed to the granting of the veto. In a one-sided struggle, the appetites and ambitions of the Powers won out over the voices of reason and equity. Subsequently, Mexico consistently opposed the indiscriminate utilization of that prerogative, the abuse of which, as my country's Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out in the general debate, many times prevented the Council from performing its most essential work.

In San Francisco, Mexico supported Australia's proposal that the scope of the veto should be confined to measures undertaken on the basis of Chapter VII of the Charter. At that time the winners of the Second World War also frustrated that attempt to moderate the exercise of the veto power. Now, half a century later, we urge them to reconsider that attitude. Unilateralism must give way to and make room for the collective aspirations to equality and democracy.

The process of enlarging the Security Council has its own rhythm. A solution cannot be rushed. The Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and, at the Latin American level, the Rio Group have all spoken out at the highest level in favour of giving time for reflection, so as to arrive at the "general agreement" referred to in the General Assembly resolution that established the Working Group. Echoing the voice of the vast majority, Mexico's Minister for Foreign Affairs stated in the general debate:

> "The issue is too important to be dealt with hastily." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 9th meeting, p. 25]

We reaffirm our conviction that the reform of the Security Council should be a project that unites us, not an issue that divides us. It is not a question of a source of national prestige, nor of a way of strengthening regional hegemony. Rather than special agendas, what should guide our efforts is the interest of the United Nations. We need a reform that will promote unity of leadership and purpose in the Organization and not weaken the

factors that give stability and cohesion to matters of general interest.

Let us work to build an efficient, effective, transparent and democratic Security Council that reflects the interests of all regions without discrimination, without special statuses or exclusive pr. ileges. Only in this way will the objective of adapting the Council to present circumstances be attained. Only in this way will its decisions have legitimacy and representativeness.

In the search for a Security Council of that kind, the Working Group can count on the active and resolute participation of Mexico.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): The fact that so many delegations can muster the energy to speak once again on this item, on the issue of Security Council reform, constitutes undeniable proof of our collective resolve to advance the issue in spite of the considerable conceptual gaps that still exist between various positions. What unites all Member States is a broad feeling that expansion of the Council and revision of its working methods is urgently required in order to ensure for the future its representative character and legitimacy.

Like those of most other Member States, the Austrian position on Security Council reform has been expressed in detail over the last four years. Our views have been incorporated in a working document that we submitted together with Belgium and a number of other Member States. That paper is reproduced in document A/49/965.

We believe that expansion should occur in both categories — permanent and non-permanent — and that the balance in the composition of the Council between permanent and non-permanent membership should be maintained within an overall number not exceeding 25. The representative character of the Council depends not only on the number of permanent members but also on the specific contributions non-permanent members have consistently made over the years to the work of the Council. New ideas and new approaches have again and again been initiated by non-permanent members, and more often than not, these members have also made valuable efforts to maintain the necessary liaison with the vast majority of United Nations Members not serving on the Council.

Expansion of membership in both categories will have to ensure a better representation of developing countries. Thus, while we support the interest of Japan and Germany in serving as permanent members, we equally support parallel interests from qualified countries of the South. Expansion in the non-permanent category will, by and large, have to follow recognized principles of geographic distribution.

We advocate a curtailment of the veto power, ideally limiting it to actions under Chapter VII, and do not wish to see more prominence being given to this instrument through the expansion of the category of permanent membership.

We strongly support efforts to further increase transparency in the working methods of the Council and enhanced possibilities for non-member States to have their views heard.

Finally, we believe that a periodic review of the composition of the Council would also help maintain its representative character for the future. Such a review should examine whether potential future changes in international relations should and could be reflected through further structural changes in the composition of the membership.

It must be obvious to everybody following this debate that more efforts will be needed to construct bridges between various national and group positions. While we maintain the view that our position, as outlined, marks the middle ground and thus should help us in the search for a compromise, we realize that at this stage further innovative thinking might be needed. In this context, let me pay special tribute to President Razali for his valuable contribution to this process. Likewise, let me thank the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group for their relentless efforts. The fact that today we have not yet arrived at agreement on Security Council reform is certainly not due to any lack of energy or devotion to this issue on their part.

I assume that we all want to move forward towards constructing an expanded Security Council with strengthened capacity and effectiveness, enhanced representative character and improved working efficiency. After all, this appears as the major conclusion in the report of the Working Group.

In order to do so, I believe we should ponder a number of questions which, even after four years of intensive discussions, would profit from further clarification and subsequent negotiations. I should like to mention three of these issues: overall size of the Council,

decision-making process and rotating permanent membership.

With regard to size, we need to arrive at an understanding on the acceptable outer limits of expansion. This number will have to go beyond the conservative attitudes expressed by some of the current permanent members if we want to generate sufficient support for an expansion model. At the same time, the number will have to stay below certain maximum figures if we want — as we must, by virtue of Article 108 of the Charter — to positively engage all the permanent members in the ratification process.

With regard to the decision-making process, the most difficult compromises are yet to be found. We would suggest that a combination of measures to reduce the veto power of current permanent members and an appropriate definition of the action threshold in a newly constituted enlarged Council might be a road worthy of further exploration.

Finally, on rotating permanent membership, I do not wish to hide the fact that my delegation still has certain difficulties with this concept, as do others. However, should this be the key to the magic solution we seem to be looking for, I believe the concept would and could then gain sufficient support; but for that to happen further explanations will be necessary.

Under Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter, the Members of the United Nations confer upon the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and agree that in the discharge of this duty the Council acts on their behalf. What can be done to reconcile this concept with systems of regional rotation? In the most likely case — that future permanent members will not enjoy veto powers — can one envisage permanent members without the two main characteristics of permanent membership? If so, what can be done to minimize this obvious inconsistency?

I have tried to pinpoint some of the more important issues that, in our view, still need further elaboration. Other delegations have referred to similar or other issues. I believe that this should not disappoint or discourage us. It should not come as a surprise that a major undertaking of this kind needs sustained efforts by all interested delegations.

After four years of fairly intensive debate, my delegation remains interested in seeing a swift result of our deliberations. Discussions until now have resulted in the widely held view that the current composition of the Council is no longer representative and that the Council therefore lacks legitimacy. This situation is unhealthy. It needs to be redressed. Hence, our interest in seeing reform of the Council brought about as soon as feasible.

Mr. Sharma (India): As the reform session of the General Assembly begins its consideration of a cardinal aspect of the reform of the United Nations, I would like to pay tribute, Mr. President, to the sagacity with which you have ventured to clear the atmosphere that seemed to have clouded consideration of the item pertaining to the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

We welcome your reappointment of the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group and your decision to have it resume its work early next year. It is reassuring that we shall continue to benefit from the guidance and diligence of Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama when the Group tries once more to bring its mandate to fruition.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The imperatives of reform of the Security Council are well recognized. The challenge that faces us now is to translate the identifiable consensus that exists in favour of Security Council reform to a general agreement on the nature and modalities of the reform exercise. Expansion of the membership, improvement of the working methods and changes in decision-making procedures have been widely identified as essential ingredients of the comprehensive package of reform.

We unanimously agreed at the last session that we should continue building on the work done during previous sessions. It is therefore incumbent on us to continue the process of developing a widely shared perspective during the current session in a sustained and objective manner. Such an exercise will carry weight by being transparent, participative and devoid of suspicion and distrust.

India's position on the variety of issues related to this subject reflects our willingness to proceed in an objective manner. On the issue of expansion, we have held that it is an objective reality that the ratio of the Security Council membership to the General Assembly

membership has declined from 1 to 4.6 at the time of the adoption of the United Nations Charter, to 1 to 12.33 today. The ratio of permanent Security Council members to the General Assembly membership has declined from 1 to 10 in 1945 to 1 to 37 now. The present permanent members of the Council have a combined population of about 1.8 billion. This leaves two thirds of the world's population without representation in the permanent category in an Organization whose Charter was framed in the name of "the peoples of the United Nations".

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Imbalance in the permanent membership of the Security Council arises not only from the exclusion of an overwhelming section of the world population, but also from the disproportionately high representation of a particular group of countries. This situation needs to be alleviated rather than accentuated. Developing countries need to be represented equitably in the permanent category. The Prime Minister of India, in his address before the current session of the General Assembly, emphasizing this need, stated:

> "In this way the decisions of the Council will truly reflect the wider membership of the United Nations. Otherwise, the Council's actions will be seen as progressively less representative at a time when it is being called upon to act far more frequently than before on behalf of the world community". [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 9th meeting]

This need is all the more pressing in the era of globalization that is upon us, when the affairs of the world are being woven together more closely than ever before.

The expansion of the Security Council must equip it to face the challenges of the next millennium. An inclusive approach would strengthen it. Any attempt to exclude developing countries from the highest echelon of the Council's membership would weaken its credibility and support for its actions.

To us, as to a vast majority, the requirement of an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories is self-evident. The creation of intermediate subsidiary categories will not address the central issue of correcting the imbalance within the permanent category of the Council itself, which is what we are mandated to rectify. It will perpetuate the imbalance, the recognition of which is the starting point of this reform exercise, rather than redress it.

India has always held that a normative approach, which brings coherence to the debate, should guide the exercise of reform of the Security Council. The aim is to achieve a broad-based rather than a piecemeal expansion. This can be encouraged if criteria are discussed so that a uniform perspective informs the appreciation of what is involved in expanded permanent membership. Elements relevant here would be the share of humanity represented by a country; geographical spread; size and potential of the economy; contributions within the United Nations system as a whole, and particularly to peacekeeping; an independent and constructive engagement in world affairs; and, to meet the challenges of the approaching millennium, the evolving potential of a State. During the general debate, other Member States also emphasized the need to orient the exchanges before us towards a consideration of criteria. Perhaps it would be useful to pursue this path further when the Working Group resumes next year. It would ensure a non-discriminatory approach and develop a uniform perspective, principles to which we have committed ourselves.

The General Assembly is the most representative organ of the United Nations. This indeed is the forum where the choice of any new permanent members should be made without any precondition or any predetermination. Resolution 48/26 called for an expansion of the Security Council to be based on general agreement. This was affirmed by the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi last April, as well as by the recent meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement held in New York in September. The idea of consensus at a regional or group level cannot therefore be relevant.

Reform of the Security Council is not only a matter of evolution in its composition and size but also an opportunity for reviewing its working methods so as to provide for enhanced transparency, greater accountability to the general membership of the United Nations through a more purposeful relationship with the General Assembly, and a new understanding of its decision-making procedures. The Non-Aligned Movement has provided constructive suggestions on the entire array of issues under this rubric. There has been substantial convergence of views on a variety of measures. We hope that the forthcoming discussions in the Working Group

will also lead to further progress on how to proceed with the institutionalizing of agreed measures.

Non-discrimination is an ideal that has imbued our approach on all aspects of Security Council reform. Any new understanding of decision-making procedures and veto needs to be in conformity with this guiding principle.

Finally, any package that we arrive at would, of necessity, be subject to an appropriate review, not because it is the first step in a long-drawn process, but because constructive adaptation to change is essential to preserve the effectiveness of any organization, particularly one representative of the entire world community.

There is a clear and categorical national consensus in India, cutting across the entire political spectrum, that India could appropriately shoulder the responsibilities of permanent membership in an expanded United Nations Security Council. India's position on this was declared initially in 1994 and reiterated recently by Prime Minister Shri Inder Kumar Gujral in his address to the General Assembly plenary. The Prime Minister reaffirmed that India is prepared to bear in full the responsibilities of permanent membership.

Permanent members are expected to bring with them a global vision and global responsibilities. From the earliest days of the United Nations, India has been instrumental in placing on its agenda issues on which it has had the most success, including decolonization, apartheid and human rights. Permanent members have a special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. India has shown a constant commitment to this objective since independence. Since the creation of the United Nations, India has been a leading contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, including in the most complex operations in Korea, the Congo and Somalia.

This year we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence. We have come a long way since 1947. For the past five decades, we have developed progressively effective national capabilities and self-reliance over a wide range of sectors, particularly in the national economy, diverse areas of advanced science and technology, and human-resource development. All this and much more has been achieved within the framework of a transparent and vibrant democracy. Our endeavour is to contribute to the overall international effort towards economic development, peace and stability.

Over the past five decades, India has been committed to forcefully articulating the concerns, priorities and perspectives of the developing world with reason, balance and a constructive orientation.

It is true that the process of reform of the Security Council has been under way for four years. However, the effort expended on this necessary venture has not been without success. We feel that some progress has been made, and we should continue assiduously to advance it. India will continue to be engaged actively and constructively in this endeavour.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): Let me begin with sincere congratulations to Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand on their reappointment as co-Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. By renewing its expression of confidence in them, the General Assembly has put on record its recognition of their tireless efforts in the service of the Group and, above all, for their patience.

Our debate on Security Council reform is taking place in a context marked in particular by the ongoing discussion of the Secretary-General's reform proposals. Here the General Assembly recently adopted a major resolution on a series of measures, and is about to pronounce itself on institutional reforms intended to chart a course for the modernization of the United Nations so that it will be better prepared to meet present and future challenges. However worthwhile and important it is, this effort will remain incomplete unless it is complemented by more substantial reform with the ultimate purpose of rewriting obsolete provisions of the Charter and modernizing institutions and relationships within the Organization that still reflect the logic and concerns of the world as it looked at the end of the Second World War.

Because it is at the centre of our system of collective security, and because it is the place for the expression of and, sometimes, for clashes between the interests and stakes of the powerful, the Security Council represents — along with reform of the Council — a test of our collective readiness to establish more democratic and more representative institutions and to build international relations that bear the stamp of justice and solidarity.

Since the General Assembly decided four years ago to debate this item in plenary meeting, delegations have traditionally sought in their statements to take stock of the results of the waning session and to look to the prospects for the future. The temptation to do this is all the greater today, because the present session has been especially eventful. It will be remembered as the session that most clearly demonstrated our inability to find a compromise satisfactory to all. It will be remembered also as the one that brought our frustrations into clearest focus.

We must acknowledge that no progress has been made on substantive issues. Whether on the size of the Council, its composition, the procedures for selecting new permanent members, or even more so the question of the veto, to name but a few, the gap between positions has grown deeper and wider, rather than narrowing thanks to desirable compromise. In part, this is because of the sensitive and complex nature of this exercise, and because of our ambitious effort to achieve genuine, across-the-board reform of the Council. Along with many others, my delegation has always favoured reform that would not be limited to a mere facelift or to a simple arithmetic process, like that which took place in 1965 — in this case increasing the number of seats on the Council from 15 to 24.

With this in mind, my delegation has encouraged the Working Group to show imagination and to reflect seriously on innovative ideas. Here I note with great regret that the idea of rotating permanent seats, recommended by the African Group and endorsed by the Harare summit, has not been adequately explored. It is a viable approach which — contrary to what its detractors, who would confine it to a specific geographical arena, say — could respond to our wish for more equitable representation in the Council.

The lack of tangible progress on decisive questions relating to the enlargement of the Council should not make us forget the major achievements made on the second group of matters, relating to the working methods of the Security Council, which in our view are no less important. On these, the Working Group had very constructive and fruitful discussions, including on substantive matters such as the institutionalization of measures the Council itself has taken to increase transparency in its work and of additional measures suggested for the most part by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Moreover, it is undeniable that improvements in the Council's working methods and procedures have been the result of the pressure and positive influence that debate and discussion in the Working Group brought to bear on Council members. It is therefore important for this dynamic to continue in order to solidify and, above all, to consolidate these achievements.

The Working Group is ready to resume its work at the fifty-second session in a climate marked by growing impatience and frustration. It is clear that such a climate does not favour the dialogue that is necessary for a compromise that can win support from the broadest possible majority. We must therefore work to restore the conditions for open, calm debate, and must avoid any action that could further impair the climate or trigger useless and harmful divisions. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the fact that reason and a wish for the general interest to prevail have very recently carried the day over confrontation.

We must make it clear that the principles that should guide our discussions, as forcefully outlined by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the Organization of African Unity, include rejecting the imposition of a deadline on the work of the Group while recognizing the need to arrive speedily at a satisfactory solution on the basis of general agreement. Because of the stakes and scope of this exercise and its impact on the future of the United Nations, we must act prudently and realistically, and must ensure that we act in the context of a genuine process of renewal and modernization of the Security Council, to which we all aspire.

Above and beyond the strict respect for the provisions of the Charter that is imperative in all circumstances and for all States — especially when it comes to amending the Charter — it is important today to ensure the cooperation and support of the greatest possible number of Member States, so as to secure the full meaning and breadth of Article 24 of the Charter.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Five years have elapsed since the General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to launch the exercise on Security Council reform by submitting a questionnaire to all Member States. Almost four years to the day have gone by since the General Assembly established the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. Yet today, as I speak, a solution still appears as elusive as ever. Positions remain far apart, very far apart.

The Working Group has spent the last nine months on the so-called Razali framework resolution, named after the former President of the General Assembly who fought a personal campaign to promote it. The core of

his latest proposal is that two new permanent seats be given to industrialized countries and three to the developing nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. This puts the three regions between two alternatives: the improbability of one country from each continent being selected, and the likelihood of permanent rotating seats. In other words, the "quick fix", which the "great pretenders" say they don't want but re-propose by deed if not by word.

Nobody has yet been able to explain to me the difference between permanent rotating seats without the veto power and regular non-permanent seats. In substance, the Razali proposal would grant two real permanent seats, with full rights and privileges, even if without the veto yet, to industrialized countries, in exchange for three pseudo-permanent seats to the nations of the South. I ask: how can anyone imagine that developing countries would accept such an exchange, perpetuating — no, aggravating — the present situation?

Currently all five permanent members are from the world's northern hemisphere and are industrialized, or on the verge of becoming so. Under the Razali system, that number would grow from five to seven, with no real, true permanent seats going to the southern hemisphere. As the President of the Italian Republic, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, said in this Hall in April of last year:

> "An Olympus of powerful countries could widen the gap and thus reduce the interest of the excluded, demeaning their political commitment in the process and perhaps marginalizing them and giving them the dangerous feeling that they are token presences, mere spectators of the decision taken by others." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 103rd meeting]

The very idea of permanent seats is rooted in international realities which prevailed at the end of the Second World War. As our Mexican colleague, Ambassador Manuel Tello, reminded us this morning, even then the idea did not seem to enjoy vast popularity.

When the United Nations Charter was drafted in San Francisco, only 30 of the 51 original members — that is, barely more than half — voted in favour of establishing permanent members of the Security Council, who could block forever, in perpetuity, any challenge to their status through the veto. While the winners of the Second World War may have succeeded in imposing such a solution back then, it does not mean they can do it again today.

In the last half century, the world has changed, and changed profoundly. Back in 1945, the great majority of countries present in this Hall today were still colonies. Now they are all sovereign, fully independent nations. And like all Member States, they treasure their sovereignty, perhaps more than anyone else. The new nations are certainly in no mood to submit to the virtual hegemony of another country, no matter how big, on their own continents. No one is ready to dilute his sovereignty in any way, fashion or style. As our colleague from Spain, Ambassador Inocencio Arias, is fond of saying: "No one really wants to act like Esau, who sold his birthright for a plate of lentils".

From the beginning, we Italians have maintained that the Razali proposal was inadequate. The same applies to the offspring of that proposal, announced by the United States in July. Both the Razali proposal and its American offspring would leave us with three categories of permanent members: permanent members with the veto, permanent members without the veto and pseudo-permanent members from developing countries — and, of course, the non-permanent members become relegated to a fourth-class category. Some of you may recall the immediate reaction in the Working Group, when this formula was announced, of the former Ambassador of India, Prakash Shah, who said: "If the developing countries rotate, so must the industrialized nations". And if I may remind you all, the principle of universal rotation is the main-stay, the very basis, of the Italian proposal for reform of the Security Council.

The Ambassador of Egypt, Nabil Elaraby, underlined last year that rotation solutions:

> "would give a larger number of countries in all regions the opportunity to assume, in turn, the responsibility of Security Council membership, thereby strengthening its role and credibility".

The pretenders to new permanent seats have claimed that a solution is "tantalizingly close". I fail to be tantalized. The truth is that on the basis of the informal, confidential consultations conducted by the co-Vice-Chairmen with Member States at the beginning of this year, the faulty assumption arose that everyone in this room was ready to accept new permanent seats of any kind.

What I believe happened is as follows: in the darkness of the confessional box, Member States were asked, "Do you want an increase in permanent seats?"

The answer, of course, was "Yes". How could it have been otherwise, since, for instance, 52 Heads of State or Government of the African countries have already agreed that they want two permanent seats, with the veto, for their continent. But if the Permanent Representatives of those 52 African countries had been asked whether they would be willing to accept only one pseudo-permanent seat, without the veto, I am sure the response would have been a resounding "No".

The time has come to seal the confessional box and consider only the positions that have been expressed in the light of day and for all to see in the Open-ended Working Group — the one and only place where Member States can make their positions clearly known to the Chairman and to each other on this crucial issue.

My delegation, the delegation of Italy, has been accused of favouring the status quo. This is simply not true. Our only aim has been, and remains, to firmly oppose unfair and discriminatory proposals. This was best put by my friend Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan, who last year said,

> "any increase in the permanent membership would serve the interests of only a few countries and would be to the detriment of small and medium-sized countries, which constitute the overwhelming majority of the membership of the United Nations." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings*, 49th meeting, p. 2]

We continue to strongly believe that Security Council reform is long overdue. This is why we have presented our own proposal, modified it in response to helpful suggestions and kept it on the table. As the Assembly knows, it has received statements of support or interest from a good 81 countries. We know that this support is not sufficient, since it falls short of the 124 votes that we firmly believe are needed for approval of any Security Council expansion. But maybe now the wind has changed, since it has become widely recognized that if the developing countries are forced to rotate, industrialized countries must also rotate. So perhaps the Italian proposal could come on stage again.

As the Foreign Minister of Italy, Mr. Lamberto Dini, said in his addresses to the General Assembly, Italy is willing to examine and support other formulas that are not incompatible with the principles upon which our own is based: democracy, real equitable geographic representation, effectiveness, efficiency and transparency. Another possibility, of course, is the fall-back position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which calls for an increase, for the time being, only in the non-permanent seats in the event that no agreement can be reached on the other categories of membership.

This leads me to our reasons for joining 21 other sponsors in presenting draft resolution A/52/L.7, which, I would once again like to underline, is of a procedural nature. Some have said that we are sending the wrong message and are pushing an aggressive approach. The exact opposite is true. As a very distinguished colleague noted, ours was simply a measure of "preventive diplomacy". It addresses three basic issues: first, the need to avoid any imposed time-frame until general agreement has been reached; secondly, the quorum required to pass any enlargement of the Security Council; and thirdly, the need to continue discussion of the question in the Open-ended Working Group, to give all Member States the chance to fully participate.

Let me elaborate briefly on these three points. With regard to the first one, we have been called by some the "inertia group". In reality, we have always maintained that reform is a matter of urgent attention, but not at the cost of sacrificing general agreement. After we submitted draft resolution A/52/L.7, Italy was asked to withdraw its support, sometimes in rather robust terms, as were others among the 22 sponsors. We resisted this suggestion. To prove our point, we insisted to the President of the General Assembly that the Working Group be reconvened in the second half of January, at the latest. The other side sought to postpone discussion until as late as March or even April, and even to cancel today's debate — a debate which, I am sure, will prove how deeply divided the membership still is on the issue. We needed only to listen to those who spoke before me to realize how true this is.

The second point, the necessary quorum to approve any reform or expansion, is by far the most important of the three issues. Again and again, every side has repeatedly argued that we need general agreement. But what kind of threshold is meant by "general agreement"? Certainly not less than two thirds of the Member States. Nobody, but nobody, I believe, could argue that such a number could be no lower than 124 votes, the same number prescribed by Article 108 for resolutions amending the Charter.

Frankly, I believe that our procedural draft resolution has a great merit: it has revealed the true intentions of the great pretenders and some of their

supporters. They now say they would adopt the Razali-framework draft resolution by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting — not by 124 votes, but by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. It is common knowledge that whenever sensitive or very controversial issues are voted on here at the United Nations, more than a few countries act like Pontius Pilate: they wash their hands of the matter. They just abstain or happen not to be present at the crucial time. We checked, and we found that in the last couple of years, for example, at the moment of the vote on controversial draft resolutions, sometimes 40 or 50 delegations were not present. Moreover, a dozen or so Member States are not allowed to vote in the General Assembly, either for well-known reasons or because they have not paid their dues. In other words — and I want to draw attention to this because I think it is a crucial point — a reform of such relevance, of such magnitude as Security Council expansion could be approved by as few as 70, 80 or 90 votes, representing less than half the membership of the United Nations. This is what our opponents are asking. This is frankly unbelievable. It is unthinkable.

Turning to my third point, there can be little doubt that the only place where efforts can be made to bridge the sea of differences still existing on the issue of Security Council reform is within the Open-ended Working Group, in the light of day and for all to see. There, the Razali formula, with all its negative implications and consequences, can finally be put to rest once and for all. Two other major options should then be revisited and fully analysed in the Working Group, namely, rotation and/or increase only in non-permanent seats along the lines of the fall-back position of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Throughout the exercise of Security Council reform, my delegation has been guided by three main motivations: first, that of protecting my country's interests. Let us set the record straight. Everyone in this Hall promotes and is called on to promote his or her own national interests. I said last year, and I repeat now, that Italy, the fifth-largest producer of wealth in the world and soon to become the fifth-largest contributor to the United Nations regular budget, will never, never accept relegation to third- or fourth-class status.

Our second motivation is that of protecting a dream. Like many other Europeans, we Italians hope that in the not-too-distant future there can be a common European seat on the Security Council. Increasing the number of permanent members on the Council from the countries of the European Union would deal a setback to that dream rather than move it closer to reality.

Last but not least, we are motivated by the desire to protect the interests of the United Nations as a whole. Article 25 of the Charter provides that

> "The Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council".

Such an enormous and extraordinary delegation of power can be upheld only through trust and a system of accountability. The one true test of accountability in a democratic system is regular elections. The creation of new permanent members would exempt certain countries from the test of regular elections and therefore further erode the supremacy of the General Assembly. We must not allow this to happen. For, in the end, the General Assembly is and must remain the cornerstone of our Organization.

To conclude, as Foreign Minister Dini wrote yesterday in an article published simultaneously in *The International Herald Tribune*, the *General Anzeiger*, and *Corriere della Sera*:

> "Any reform, if it is to pass the scrutiny of national parliaments and public opinion, must produce real progress in terms of the credibility, democracy and authority of the most universal of world institutions." [International Herald Tribune, Editorial/Opinion pages, 3 December 1997]

In other words, it must reflect a Security Council of the future, not the Security Council of the past.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): The reform of the Security Council is an issue of vital importance which has far-reaching implications not only for the future of the Organization itself but for the health of international relations in the twenty-first century as well. Although four years of deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group have not yet led to general agreement on any specific formula for reform, they have identified the key issues of contention and enabled us to discern what lies at the heart of the divergence of views among Member States.

We all agree that the changes in international relations over the past several decades are of a nature that warrants expansion of Council membership.

Divergent views exist on the issue of how these changes can best be reflected in alterations of the composition of the Council and how a mechanism can be devised to ensure that the composition remains in line with future changes in international relations. We believe that this divergence of views can be resolved if the reform of the Council is based on an objective analysis of the problems and shortcomings of the Council's operations thus far.

The last half century has witnessed the emergence of a considerable number of nations endowed with significant power resources with which to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that the Security Council should be reformed in a way which ensures that these nations can serve in the Council with reasonable frequency, commensurate with their capabilities to contribute to international peace and security. In our view, this can best be done through an increase in the non-permanent category of Council membership alone, by providing for a mechanism under which those countries with distinguished capabilities to contribute to international security can be elected to Council membership with greater frequency or longer tenure than others.

The idea of creating five new permanent seats, two from the industrialized world and three from the developing world, has been afloat for some time now. Over the past five decades some Member States have come to acquire power resources which are comparable to those held by some of the current permanent members. We fully understand the aspirations of some of these countries to permanent membership. However, we are concerned that an increase in permanent membership might actually create more problems than it solves.

Let me for the sake of clarity elaborate further on some of the problems we should expect to arise.

First of all, there seems to be no clear way to determine which countries are qualified for permanent membership and which are not. If any proposed expansion of permanent seats takes place, there are certain to be many other Member States that are not fortunate enough to be elected to new permanent membership but that are just as qualified in terms of power resources as those that do. This means that, in the name of eliminating the existing discrimination between current permanent members and aspirants to new permanent membership, we would actually end up creating an even worse system of discrimination that affects a greater number of countries. Those countries would feel marginalized and alienated as third-class Member States, and might well lose their incentive to make constructive contributions to the work of our Organization. Given the capability and willingness of these nations to make a meaningful contribution to international peace and security, this would be a setback to the health and vitality of the United Nations.

In the light of what takes place in the Security Council in terms of realpolitik, we are concerned that an increase in permanent membership could further enhance the possibility of excluding the real issues affecting international peace and security from the purview of the Security Council. It would also undermine the efficiency of the Council in responding to conflict situations in a timely manner, because more time would be spent on working out differences among a large number of permanent members.

The virtual irreplaceability of permanent members, once they are elected, is yet another serious problem associated with the increase in permanent membership. If a one-time decision were to hold sway for all time, Member States would be forced to live for ever with the results of one fateful decision based on the international political realities at a fixed point in time, regardless of the dynamic evolution of international relations that might unfold in the future. The dynamics of international relations are such that in the future there could be other countries which catch up with or surpass the power resources of permanent members. A system of periodic review cannot properly address the problem of the growing gap between the composition of the Council and underlying international realities because new permanent members would be able to perpetuate their privileged status with the support of a mere one third of the general membership.

Apart from these problems, an increase in the ratio of Council members not regularly elected by — and thus not accountable to — the general membership would undermine the political legitimacy and credibility of the Council to act on behalf of the general membership. This is certainly not consistent with the vision which my Government holds for the Security Council in the twenty-first century.

Bearing these problems in mind, we strongly hope that common ground can be found which will enable us to transform the Security Council into a more representative, effective, efficient and democratic body. We will work closely with other interested Member States to work out a solution acceptable to the entire

membership. We will remain open-minded and flexible with regard to any constructive proposals which can move this important process in the right direction.

My delegation would like to say a word on the current under-representation of the Asian Group in the Security Council. As it stands, without counting permanent members, the Asian Group of 48 countries holds the same number of non-permanent seats as the 33-member Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the 24-country Group of Western European and other States. The Asian Group is the only regional group which has expanded in both membership and geographical coverage since the end of the cold war. Given the number of countries and other relevant factors, the Asian Group deserves at least as many non-permanent seats as the African Group in an expanded Council. Any formula that fails to address this problem will be neither fair nor just for the Asian Group.

Finally, as a sponsor of draft resolution A/52/L.7, we reaffirm our opposition to any imposed artificial time-frame for deliberations on this important issue and to any attempt to adopt in the General Assembly substantive decisions by less than a two-thirds majority of the entire membership.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.